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Abstract

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Project Title: DEPRESSION/DESIRE FOR DEATH IN TERMINAL CANCER PATIENTS

Abstract: *A clinically important mental health issue in palliative care concerns desire for death and its relationship to depression. Research focused on desire for death provides a link to understanding why patients might want to end their lives or request physician-assisted suicide (PAS) in the face of terminal illness. There have been several recent studies of patients with cancer or AIDS, demonstrating the central role of depression in desire for death and hypothetical interest in PAS. With one exception, these studies have not directly assessed desire for death among terminally ill patients, and no research has attempted to answer the question of whether treatment for depression has a significant impact on desire for death. This project aims to describe desire for death among patients with end-stage cancer, determine its correlates, and assess the impact of treatment for major depression on desire for death. Specifically, the research would assess the prevalence, severity, stability, and medical/psychosocial correlates of desire for death among terminally ill cancer patients hospitalized in a palliative care facility. It will examine the relationship between desire for death and a clinical diagnosis of Major Depressive Episode. Desire for death will then be monitored in a group of patients who receive a standardized pharmacological treatment for depression, as well as in patients who do not receive any intervention. This study is expected to provide a direct evaluation of desire for death in terminally ill cancer patients, and to ascertain whether a pharmacological treatment for depression influences desire for death.*

Thesaurus Terms:

attitude, epidemiology, major depression, neoplasm /cancer palliative treatment,

*psychological aspect of cancer, suicide, terminal patient care
choice, coping, death, mental disorder chemotherapy
clinical research, human subject*

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